



## **MERC Meeting Summary**

January 15, 2025

9-10am via Zoom

### **Introduction/Meeting Attendees**

Council members introduced themselves and their agency/program.

In attendance today:

- Angella Holloway-CHS/SCC ROSC
- Ashley Ramos-Gateway Foundation
- Beverly Holland-CHS/Statewide ROSC
- Conswala Jones-CHS/SCC ROSC
- Cora Hughs-Community Faith
- Daniel Hutchison-CHS/ Director of Community Health
- Dusty Hanner-CHS
- Elbert Jennings- ISP
- Elyse Schoen-St. Francis Way Clinic
- Kara Wardein-CHS
- Kathy Kehrer-CHS/CCE
- Katie Wilson-CHS/MERC Madison County ROSC
- Kristen Anderson-CHS Community Outreach
- Lisa Massa- DCFS
- Mark Knott-CHS/MERC Madison County ROSC
- Megan McGlassen-IRC
- Melanie Willaims- CHS
- Tammy Iakarous-RFM
- Towana Howard- St. Clair County Health Department
- Tracy Dones-CHS/FAITH
- Ty White- Community Member

## Agency Spotlight/Guest Speaker

- The guest speaker for this month was Melanie Willaims, Community Health Specialist III with the PREP, Personal Responsibility Education Program. She spoke to the council about internet safety and children. Melanie sent her power point information to Mark Knott and Katie Wilson power point and additional information to provide for the group.

## Discussion

- **Internet Safety and Children**
- Melanie Willaiams spoke to the group about internet safety and keeping children safe. She spoke to the group about what to look for in online gaming groups, and even the use of AI; what to look out for as far is sex trafficking, sex-tortion, sex- tourism, and sexual harassment online. Advised group about parental controls on kids/teens cellphones and other devices as well as monitoring online activity.
- Prevention tips: Talking about these things with your children and teens and what to look out for. Reminding your kids and teens to talk with a trusted adult if they don't feel comfortable talking to their parents. Reminding children and teens that adults should not be asking them for help. Talking to children and teens about the fact that people can claim they are whoever they want to be online, and that they may be lying about their age/gender/location. Please remember to always call your local police and notify them also.

## Workgroup Reports

A workgroup planning meeting was held on 12/23/25 from 2-3pm via Zoom, hosted by Mark Knott and Katie Wilson. The discussion was on planning and joining events to bring substance use and mental health treatments to more people in the community. The group discussed creating events with other agencies to promote this effort. An email will be sent out to current volunteers to determine when the next workgroup meeting will be held. To learn more or to join a workgroup, email [merc@chestnut.org](mailto:merc@chestnut.org)

- **Stigma Reduction Workgroup:** Group focus on reducing stigma connected to people who use substances, people experiencing mental health problems, and those seeking treatment or recovery support services. Inclusive of the entire community with specific focus on the impact stigma has on compassion towards the unhoused.
  - Work group members: Mark Knott, Katie Wilson, Kathy Kehrer, Dustin Percy, Jennifer Schultz

- Notes from December meeting, we have looked at the upcoming season and recognize that there will be opportunities during the spring to create some events working with Oxford House inc. and working with some of the local colleges during their health fairs. We are also looking at areas to expand our footprint in the Madison County community to continue work on using local parks to attract more community and those individuals in the recovery process.
- **Awareness and Access to Services/Recovery Support Workgroup:** Group focus is to increase community knowledge of services available and increase awareness of how to access them by developing targeted educational campaigns that will include information about behavioral health issues specific communities are experiencing, what types of resources are available in or near these communities, and how these resources can be accessed.
  - Workgroup Members: Mark Knott, Katie Wilson, Kara Wardein
  - Notes from December meeting, we have looked at the upcoming season and recognize that there will be opportunities during the spring to create some events working with Oxford House inc. and working with some of the local colleges during their health fairs. We are also looking at areas to expand our footprint in the Madison County community to continue work on using local parks to attract more community and those individuals in the recovery process.
- **Education and Access to Harm Reduction Workgroup:** Group focus is to develop targeted public awareness campaigns that will highlight what harm reduction services are available, why these services are vital to the community, and where these services can be accessed.
  - Workgroup Members: Mark Knott, Katie Wilson, Jen Nagel-Fisher, Paul Fisher, Mike Luther
  - Notes from December meeting, we have looked at the upcoming season and recognize that there will be opportunities during the spring to create some events working with Oxford House inc. and working with some of the local colleges during their health fairs. We are also looking at areas to expand our footprint in the Madison County community to continue work on using local parks to attract more community and those individuals in the recovery process.

### **Announcements and Upcoming Events**

- **Upcoming ROSC Events:**

- “Recovery Without Stigma” Held at 6pm Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> at the Edwardsville Library, hosted by Mark Knott of MERC. This is an open stigma conversation and naloxone education event. To learn more, email [merc@chestnut.org](mailto:merc@chestnut.org) or visit [Recovery Without Stigma | Edwardsville Public Library](#)
- **Upcoming Council member events/announcements:**
  - Sheridan Jordan from Take Action Coalition shared their Love Recovery event. This is being held on February 6, 2026 at the VFW in Clinton County. There will be speakers, food, photo booth and DJ.
  - Conswala Jones from CHS and St. Clair County ROSC shared the Purple One Training, Held on January 22, 2026 from 10am- 2pm at the St. Clair County Regional Department of Education.
  - Conswala Jones from CHS and St. Clair County ROSC shared that Marissa will be hosting their first Resource Fair from 10am-2pm.

### **Adjournment Announcements**

- Next meeting will be February 19, 2026, via Zoom. Link and reminder will be sent before the meeting.
- Next Workgroup meeting will be: TBD
- Please see flyers accompanying this summary for important and exciting things happening!



**Metro East Recovery Council (MERC) Vision:** A community system that nurtures and supports individuals and families seeking or maintaining recovery for themselves or a loved one.

**Metro East Recovery Council (MERC) Mission:** Collaborating to build and empower communities of recovery.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MetroEastRecovery](https://www.facebook.com/MetroEastRecovery)

For more information: [www.govst.edu/Recovery-Support/Southern-IL-ROSC/MERC-ROSC-Council/](http://www.govst.edu/Recovery-Support/Southern-IL-ROSC/MERC-ROSC-Council/)